

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA



Public Hearing
on

B26-0052 - Evidence-Based Gun Violence Reduction and Prevention Act of 2025

Submitted Testimony

The Executive Office of the Mayor

Before the
Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety
The Honorable Brooke Pinto, Chairman

December 4, 2025
9:30 a.m.
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW Room 500
Washington, D.C. 20004

**GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY MAYOR FOR PUBLIC SAFETY AND JUSTICE**



Public Hearing
on

B26-0052 - Evidence-Based Gun Violence Reduction and Prevention Act of 2025

Testimony of
Lindsey Appiah
Deputy Mayor for Public Safety and Justice

Title I

Before the
Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety
The Honorable Brooke Pinto, Chairman

December 4, 2025
9:30 a.m.
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW Room 500
Washington, D.C. 20004

TITLE I. GROUP VIOLENCE INTERVENTION INITIATIVE.

Good afternoon, Chairperson Pinto, Councilmembers, and staff of the Committee on the Judiciary and Public Safety. I am Lindsey Appiah, Deputy Mayor for Public Safety and Justice and I am offering Executive testimony in opposition to Title I of B26-0052, “Evidence-Based Gun Violence Reduction and Prevention Act of 2025.”

Continuing to reduce gun violence and drive down crime remains one of the most critical and pressing priorities for Mayor Bowser. Through increased accountability and extremely hard work across the whole of government and in partnership with community, we have driven down violent crime in our city by 28% this year and 53% since 2023. We have reduced gun violence by 41% this year and 65% since 2023. These reductions are not just numbers – they are people not being victimized in our city. They are the result of making data driven decisions, investing in our people and in cutting-edge technology, passing common-sense legislation, and being laser focused on executing the agency missions within our public safety and justice ecosystem. Our efforts are working to make our city safer and now is the time to continue investing in what works – not in creating new initiatives that add bureaucratic and administrative burdens and operational confusion amongst public safety stakeholders.

It is for this reason the Executive opposes Title I of B26-0052. As introduced, the bill purports to address gun violence in the District by creating additional layers of bureaucracy and detracting from the beneficial and effective work being done to curb gun violence by creating a governing board to direct law enforcement activities and yet another working group in the strategy and implementation team comprised of the same District and federal agencies who already work together on a host of existing committees, taskforces, task groups, advisory teams, weekly shooting reviews, and more throughout our ecosystem focused on reducing gun violence and violent crime.

Additionally, Title I is unnecessary and redundant, replicating the missions of several existing Executive agencies, most notably the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD), Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement (ONSE), and the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council (CJCC). Currently, MPD works with law enforcement partners and other public safety stakeholders to implement strategies aimed at reducing crime and violence in the District.

Further, this Initiative inappropriately interferes in law enforcement activity. Title I states the Strategy and Implementation Team has the “capacity, authority, or expertise to handle the daily operations of the Initiative, including making key decisions, developing strategies, securing resources, and continuously monitoring results.” The planning and execution of law enforcement activities should vest in those with the expertise and experience to make complex policing decisions, the Chief and Command staff of MPD, not a myriad of non-law enforcement members of a Council created Governing Board and Strategy and Implementation Team. Successful crime reduction is dependent on clarity of role and chain of command. This bill confuses that and adds needless ambiguity into an already complex public safety and justice ecosystem at a moment in which our collective strategies are in fact working to reduce gun violence.

Title I also seems to ignore the existence of ONSE and its mission to “build partnerships and implement strategies that reduce gun-related violence in the District by coordinating the District’s gun violence prevention and intervention initiatives, using both public health and public safety

tools, and by focusing on identifying and engaging with those most likely to be involved in gun violence, providing them with an alternative to crime.” It is unclear what the distinction is between ONSE’s statutorily mandated responsibility to identify, recruit, and engage individuals determined to be at high risk of participating in, or being a victim of, violence criminal activity and the proposed Initiative. Parallel bodies doing substantially similar work do not lead to beneficial outcomes in our city. Instead, those attempting to do the work end up confused and distracted as to who is responsible instead of focusing their time and attention on increasing safety and reducing violence.

Finally, CJCC already convenes many of the same partners listed in this Title to do much the same type of work. Our system is currently taxed by the number of working groups, committees, and commissions that exist to do the same or substantially similar work. Specifically, the Combating Violent Crime Committee within the CJCC exists specifically to “evaluate and enhance the District of Columbia’s strategic and systemic efforts to combat violent crimes, with a specific emphasis on gun crimes.”

While we are all committed to continuing to drive down gun violence in our community, the creation of another taskforce, task group, initiative, advisory group, or committee is not the means to achieve that end. Instead, the Executive urges Council to focus on supporting the successful efforts already underway to continue to drive down gun violence in our city and vote against Title I.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I am available to answer questions on Title I of the bill.

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA



Public Hearing
on

B26-0052 - Evidence-Based Gun Violence Reduction and Prevention Act of 2025

Written Testimony for the Record

Titles II, IV, and V

Before the
Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety
The Honorable Brooke Pinto, Chairman

December 4, 2025
9:30 a.m.
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW Room 500
Washington, D.C. 20004

TITLE II. CIVILIAN INVESTIGATORS AT THE METROPOLITAN POLICE DEPARTMENT.

Title II authorizes the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) to employ civilians to investigate property crimes and cold cases where there is no expected contact with suspects. As an initial matter, MPD already employs professional staff to support investigations in data searches and analysis that do not require interactions with suspects or witnesses. Still, MPD does not support the proposed program for two main reasons detailed below.

First, this program does not align with MPD's program for developing high-quality detectives. MPD's clearance rate for violent crimes is historically higher than that of comparably sized cities and investigating property crimes is an important step in developing good detectives. Although the legislation requires MPD to develop a training program for these civilian detectives, there is no substitute for experience that is built up over time, from being a police officer to becoming a detective for property crimes, to working up to the most serious violent crimes. This could cause a cascading experience gap for other detective units beyond property crime investigations. Moreover, traditionally some of our most talented detectives have worked on cold cases.

Second, this will likely not be supported by MPD's officers and detectives. The Fraternal Order of Police (FOP), which represents MPD's officers, detectives, and sergeants, has already filed an unfair labor practice with the Public Employees Relations Board over the civilianization of three positions that have historically been staffed at least in part by professional staff: helicopter pilots, range instructors, and cell block technicians. The FOP is seeking the termination of any civilians hired in those positions as well as that MPD pay the FOP costs and attorney fees. They would certainly object to these civilian detectives, notwithstanding the provision in the legislation stipulating that they will not supplant or replace sworn law enforcement personnel or reduce the total number of sworn personnel employed by MPD. Detective positions and the detective career development path are highly sought after by officers, and this program would likely have a negative impact on the availability of opportunities for officers.

With a potential negative impact on the strength of MPD's investigative program and on its sworn officers, the Executive cannot support this proposal.

TITLE IV. ADDRESSING CRIMINAL BLIGHT IN THE DISTRICT.

The Department of Buildings (DOB) has three major concerns regarding the proposed creation of a "criminal blight" designation under Title IV of Bill B26-0052.

First, it is unclear what new authority or tools this designation would provide. Existing nuisance abatement mechanisms already address any issues of building condition through the property maintenance code.

Second, the term "criminal blight" risks conflation of any undesirable condition occurring at a property with "blight" as defined in DC Code § 42-3131.05 (1) (A). This new "criminal blight" designation may lead to an increase in calls and complaints to DOB when there is alleged criminal or antisocial behavior at a building but no building code violations.

Finally, DOB is not the appropriate agency to lead on criminal matters. Much of the data that would inform the designation in the law, as drafted, originates with MPD, and any enforcement would require close coordination with the Office of the Attorney General (OAG).

It's important to note that OAG already has a dedicated nuisance abatement fund under D.C. Code § 42-3111.01, which supports enforcement of drug-, firearm-, and prostitution-related nuisances. If the Council wishes to expand nuisance enforcement to include "criminal blight," that authority would be more appropriately housed within OAG's existing framework, rather than creating a parallel structure under DOB.

TITLE V. MEDICAID FUNDING FOR COMMUNITY VIOLENCE PREVENTION SERVICES.

Title V of the Evidence-Based Gun Violence Reduction and Prevention Act of 2025 requires the Department of Health Care Finance (DHCF) to amend its State Plan to provide for Medicaid reimbursement of gun-violence intervention activities. This directive is improperly prescriptive and infringes on independent executive authority established by law. DHCF is the District's single state Medicaid agency recognized under D.C. Official Code § 1-307.02(a), which vests the Mayor with the responsibility for administering the Medicaid program and ensuring compliance with federal requirements – including covered services and reimbursement policy. This structure is designed to centralize Medicaid authority within the executive branch. Because the Council cannot substitute its policy preferences for the operational judgment of the single state agency, any statutory mandate directing DHCF to submit a State Plan Amendment undermines established separation of powers and exceeds the legislature's authority. For that reason, Title V's directive to amend the Medicaid state plan as legally insufficient and inconsistent with established law.

While the underlying policy goals may be laudable, the operationally complex requirements of establishing reimbursement underscore why this approach should not be pursued in statute. Submitting and operationalizing a State Plan Amendment involves complex steps that include consultation with Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, rate-setting, and systems configuration that cannot be accelerated without comprising compliance, program integrity, and federal approval. This shows why Medicaid programs are structured with independent authority as the executive agency must have discretion to determine the best path to sustainable implementation balancing a variety of factors.

* * *

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on B26-0052. *Please direct any written follow-up questions on Titles II-V to the Office of Policy and Legislative Affairs.*